12 January 2017

Mr James Dornan MSP
Convener
Education and Skills Committee
T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Convenor

School Education Report - additional information on councils making good use of data

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a private briefing to the Committee on the Accounts Commission’s 2014 report on school education at the meeting on 14 December. One of the issues we discussed was examples of councils making good use of data to support improvement, and we agreed to send you some further information on this.

A number of the recommendations in the report are focussed around councils continuing to make better use of data in terms of benchmarking their performance, sharing good practice and providing the right information to elected members to ensure that they can adequately challenge and hold education services to account. From our impact work, attendance at councils’ committee meetings and our review of information provided to elected members we know that, in general terms, councils continue to improve how they use data to drive improvement.

We would like to highlight the following illustrative examples of councils making good use of data to support improvement, which we identified through our audit work.

**East Renfrewshire Council**
- The council gathers a wide range of performance information, and it has been using standardised testing for a number of years.
- Baseline assessments are carried out for all pupils in P1, with standardised testing used again at various stages throughout primary and into secondary. This enables pupils who are not performing as well as others to be identified quickly, allowing schools to give tailored support to individual pupils.
- There are well established performance management and reporting arrangement in place. Detailed analysis of all performance information gathered takes place at both council and school level. This information allows the council to compare performance between schools, develop interventions and set appropriate targets.

**West Lothian Council**
- The council has a well developed approach to performance management and use of data.
- Pupil tracking and monitoring is well established and takes place at both a school and council level.
- A standardised testing programme is in place at key stages, and information derived is used to raise awareness of the importance of attainment, target underachievement and identify support strategies. There is a particular focus on those pupils who are most in need.
Fife Council
- The council has developed its tracking and monitoring systems at both primary and secondary level through standardised testing and better performance management.
- Annual performance packs are produced for each school. These identify that school's performance compared to other schools so that areas of underachievement can be targeted.
- Data is used to drive improvement across a number of areas such as setting targets and targeting the lowest performing pupils.

I hope this information is useful to the Committee. Please let me know if you need any further information.

Best wishes,

Tricia Meldrum
Senior Manager